

NSC BRIEFING

23 December 1953

CONTESTED BALLOTS IN
ITALIAN 1953 ELECTIONS

- I. Approximately 1,300,000 ballots in the election of 7-8 June were challenged by poll watchers as invalid for any one of several reasons - writing of any kind on ballot, failure to designate party as well as candidates, handing in blank ballot, using ballot not having an official stamp, etc.
 - A. Examination of ballots by Chamber special committee is not yet complete but findings to date show that between 436,000 and 590,000 were invalid and that from 700,000 to 860,000 have to be recounted.

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B. Of those to be counted, at least 100,000 have been recounted so far, with the trend three to one in favor of the center electoral bloc of parties.

1. Embassy Rome believes this center bloc thus had a winning margin of some 300,000.

C. If this is so, center parties gained more than 50 per cent of the votes. Hence, they are legally entitled to the two-thirds majority in the Chamber of Deputies which the March 1953 electoral law was designed to provide.

II. Ex-premier De Gasperi, questioned by Ambassador Luce late in November as to why center parties were concealing their victory, stated that:

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- A. To present the new returns to parliament would cause a chaotic situation in that body and necessitate new elections.
 - B. To announce the victory would be a good device for dissolving Chamber, but *other than "the Christian Democrats were robbed"* would only be a device, ~~and for~~ issues would have to be developed to make the new elections worthwhile.
 - C. To raise again the whole issue of the March 1953 electoral law was undesirable, particularly in view of current efforts to repeal this law.
- III. It is possible that the slowness of recount may be due to general apprehension of the major parties over results and to the center parties' reluctance to bring up issue of the unpopular electoral law.

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- A. Problem of reallocating seats virtually insoluble and new elections probably only solution.
- B. Parties in general do not want new elections.
 - 1. They would be expensive.
 - 2. Center fears extremes of left and right might gain.
 - 3. Fear that unseating Communist deputies might induce violence by extreme left.
- C. Recount favoring center parties might call into question legality of present parliament's legislation.
- D. Bills are now in parliament to repeal the 29 March 1953 electoral law. If this is done, the recount would have little real meaning.